

## Golding's *The Spire* as an Architectonic Novel

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**Abstract:** In his article "Golding's *The Spire* as an Architectonic Novel" Stephan Schaffrath analyzes William Golding's work as an excellent example of one of Mikhail Bakhtin's early critical concepts. In contrast to most literary entertainment which thrives on the readers' suspension of disbelief, *The Spire* challenges readers to actively and consciously interpret its text, thus raising readers' awareness as participants in the reading act. *The Spire* achieves this by presenting readers with a novelistic world seen more or less through the eyes of a pseudo narrator, a third-person narration style that consistently and regularly — yet subtly — delves into the main character's mind. *The Spire* constitutes a commentary on the human tendency to take positivistic shortcuts in epistemological endeavors by building into its narrative fabric Bakhtin's notion of the once-occurrent, never-repeatable nature of one and every act.

## Stephan SCHAFFRATH

### Golding's *The Spire* as an Architectonic Novel

Beginning with his first novel, *The Lord of the Flies*, William Golding established himself as a master of the nebulous, yet richly informative style of narration later earning him the Nobel Prize in Literature. Much of Golding's work, and *The Spire* in particular, differs from more traditional and simply crafted and structured narratives. In contrast to most literary entertainment which thrives on the readers' suspension of disbelief, *The Spire* challenges readers to consciously interpret its text, thus raising readers' awareness of the participatory and unique nature of their reading acts, their architectonic awareness (see Schaffrath <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1299>>). *The Spire* achieves this by presenting readers with a novelistic world more or less through the eyes of the physically, mentally, and spiritually unwell main character, Jocelin, who constitutes a pseudo narrator. This architectonic awareness in readers is achieved by Golding's amalgamation of third and first person narration styles.

Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of architectonics holds great potential in the field of literary criticism, even though it has been vastly overlooked by scholars, at least in the English-speaking world. It presumably owes its obscurity to the fact that it is conceptually buried within one of Bakhtin's earlier and more abstract works and overshadowed by his better known and perhaps more palatable, as well as more salient work. It is conceivable that Bakhtin never considered architectonics a specific theoretical application in literary criticism. Bakhtin used the term sparsely and in context with other concepts and theories such as ethics or the chronotope, the latter of course being one of Bakhtin's best-known theoretical concepts. There are no books, chapters, or single papers specifically dedicated to architectonics. However, the precise and conspicuous manner in which Bakhtin uses the term "architectonics" (or simply in the adjective form "architectonic") produces a lucid structural approach to reality, an impressive feat considering that reality is evidently too complex to ever be captured in its entirety by the human mind. Architectonics serves as a bridge to span the epistemological chasm that exists between the necessarily practical approaches of applied sciences and technologies on the one hand and the fact that our existences are infinitely complex in nature and therefore elude absolute (and thus finite) measurement on the other hand. Even in the physical sciences, which are perceived as precise studies of our world and thus evoke positivist confidence, there are no absolute certainties in regard to physical measurements (for example, there is no conceivable largest or smallest numbers not to mention irrational numbers, Einsteinian relativity, or Heisenberg's uncertainty principle) and the uniqueness of each biological entity such as humans allows us to measure behavior (including cognitive processes) at best in terms of patterns and statistical probabilities. Architectonics offers an approximate approach to reality in the same vein as chaos theory, the scientific study of complex systems: "whereas the Newtonians focused on the clock as an appropriate image for the world, chaos theorists are apt to choose the waterfall. The clock is ordered, predictable, regular, and mechanically precise; the waterfall is turbulent, unpredictable, irregular, and infinitely varying in form" (Hayles 8). And in the study of literature especially, one is hard pressed to find a balance between the illusions of absolute values and nihilistic relativism. As Bart Keunen puts it, "as a scientific discipline, the insights provided by literary theory must inevitably be into a world of highly movable images, a world that originates and exists solely in the brain of those participating in narrative exchanges" (3). Bakhtin's attempt to conceive an architectonic (that is, structural) approach to anything that pertains to our elusive human experiences is therefore all the more daunting.

Bakhtinian architectonics bears kinship to what appears to be Golding's own authorial intent in *The Spire*. Golding outdid himself in producing a narrative that invites readers to not only enjoy the subtly refined hilarity of the novel's commentary on the central character's moral and mental frailties, but more importantly to become a cognizant participant in the narration itself. As such, according to Gary Morson's view of great works, *The Spire* would find itself in excellent company, as it actively evokes a Bakhtinian reading: "Bakhtin's preferred way of reading, which he calls 'creative understanding,' allows author and reader, the time of composition and the time of comprehension, to interact. One creates a dialogue by means of which their two voices produce something unforeseen. One lets Shakespeare, Goethe, or Tolstoy challenge us, and so, comprehending that challenge, struggles with it and offers tentative replies" (4). *The Spire*'s instigation for a reader's "creative understanding" is compounded by its self-awareness, its tendency to discourage its reader from any potential suspensions.

Architectonics is a concept that can be filtered out of one of Bakhtin's earlier and almost lost writings, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, whose genesis Michael Holquist estimates somewhere between 1919 and 1921 (viii). This work "reveals new filiations between the themes that first appear here and will guide Bakhtin's thinking throughout the course of his long life ... the relation between the world as experienced in actions and the world as represented in discourse — these are all broached here in the white heat of discovery" (Holquist ix). Even at this early stage, Bakhtin offers not a scientific system that provides a precise and reliable method but rather a valuation approach: "it is not our intention to construct a logically unified system of values with the fundamental value — my participation in Being — situated at the head, or, in other words, to construct an ideal system of various possible values. Nor do

we propose to give a theoretical transcription of values that have been actually, historically acknowledged by mankind, in order to establish such logical relations among them as subordination, co-subordination, etc., that is, in order to systematize them. What we intend to provide is not a system and not a systematic inventory of values, where pure concepts (self-identical in content) are interconnected on the basis of logical correlativity" (60-61). What is perhaps most notable about this approach is Bakhtin's devotion to studying "concrete" things while never forfeiting what Holquist terms Bakhtin's opposition "to any strict formalization" (xvii) and his "extraordinary sensitivity to the immense plurality of experience" (xx).

In Bakhtin's discussion about the architectonic nature of experience one can thus detect the genesis for at least one particular Bakhtinian staple, the chronotope, when he discusses how an architectonic approach may put human experience of space-time framed realities in context with the all-too-human tendency and necessity of making sense (that is, valuation) of it all: "what we intend to provide is a representation, a description of the actual, concrete architectonic of value-governed experiencing of the world — not with an analytical foundation at the head, but with that actual, concrete center (both spatial and temporal) from which valuations, assertions, and deeds come forth or issue, and where the constituent members are real objects, interconnected by concrete event-relations in the once-occurrent event of Being (in this context logical relations constitute but one moment along with the concrete spatial, temporal, and emotional-volitional moments)" (*Toward* 61). This excerpt shows Bakhtin's early interest in using physical terminology to discuss philosophical issues and he seeks to marry the seemingly disparate disciplines of the natural sciences and the humanities. One can also see the beginnings of Bakhtin's discussion of the chronotope, what Bakhtin himself later describes as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (*The Dialogic* 84) and what Keunen defines as "an imaginal construct or entity representing a temporal process that occurs in a spatial situation" (13). In Bakhtin's early efforts to produce "a description of the actual, concrete architectonic of value-governed experiencing of the world" (*Toward* 61), one can see the inkling of the chronotope: "the origin of experience in time and space is not what interests Bakhtin; instead, he is interested in the way in which the *effects* of experience are ordered by means of time and space" (Keunen 8). Keunen's emphasis on chronotopes as descriptors of imagination seems to build on the foundations Bakhtin lay in his early discussions of creating a method of better understanding "concrete event-relations in the once-occurrent event of Being" (*Toward* 61). Bakhtin's chronotope appears to be an extension of his early conceptualization of an architectonic understanding of our infinitely complex realities.

Bakhtin's early insistence on a "concrete architectonic of the actual world of the performed act" (*Toward* 54) is in no way contradictory to Bakhtin's later discussions on what happens when readers experience works of fiction. In Bakhtin's philosophy, imaginative performances such as the ones that are necessary for readers, as well as writers of fiction, are just as concrete and valid as any typically physical act. In his later essay "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel" Bakhtin uses similar language as in his early work: "in the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole" (*The Dialogic* 84) and "frequently in literature the chronotope of meeting fulfills architectonic functions" (*The Dialogic* 98). Bakhtin defines our world in terms of concrete experience, picking up roughly where Immanuel Kant left off, which is not completely surprising considering Bakhtin's thorough training in "classical and German thinkers" (Holquist xxii). For Bakhtin, everything (as well as every thing) in existence can best be described as events or occurrences and the focus is on the question of what happens in the here-and-now. More specifically, Bakhtin refers to these events and occurrences as acts or deeds, terms that are to be understood in the sense of experienced and participatory events: "I, too, participate in Being in a once-occurrent and never-repeatable manner: I occupy a place that cannot be taken by anyone else and is impenetrable for anyone else. In the given once-occurrent point where I am now located, no one else has ever been located in the once-occurrent time and once-occurrent space of once-occurrent Being. And it is around this once-occurrent point that all once-occurrent Being is arranged in a once-occurrent and never-repeatable manner. That which can be done by me can never be done by anyone else. The uniqueness or singularity of present-on-hand Being is compellingly obligatory" (*Toward* 40). Since no one can reproduce or even re-experience an event that has already occurred, Bakhtin defines all experiences as acts which occur once only within the space-time-continuum and are therefore irretrievably frozen within their own specific chronotopal coordinates within the four basic dimensions of width, height, depth, and time. In that sense, architectonics' participatory events or acts appear to constitute the very building blocks of what Bakhtin later calls "chronotopes." Readers experience texts as participatory acts in what Keunen calls "narrative images" which "do not belong to the text, as such, but instead represent forms of cognition; however, this does not entail that narrative images are unreal" (7). They are indeed the concrete building blocks of a reader's experience.

Architectonic acts are unique. One may attempt to produce and experience acts aimed at reproducing a former act and experience, but it is ultimately impossible to do the same thing twice. Any attempt at reproducing an act constitutes a new act, more specifically an act of attempted reproduction. No two acts are identical, since they cannot occur at the same time and place within the chronotopal universe.

Each and every act is distinct no matter how similar or virtually identical two acts may appear. The main implication of such an architectonic recognition is that the world of architectonic acts is an infinitely complex one and that any of the acts that occurred in the past can only be described (by means of a new act), but never reproduced or relived. Anything that happens only happens once. Any perceived recurrence is an illusion or a futile attempt of a reproduction, reenactment, or reliving. Such an act constitutes a new act in and of itself. An occurrence (or act) may be very similar to those of the past, but it cannot happen exactly the same way again, no matter how minute or imperceptible the differences may be. And, more importantly, the uncontrollable dimension of time makes it impossible to relive an act twice at precisely the same point of time. Any novel that consciously makes readers aware of this infinitely complex, yet concrete architectonic essence of our space-time existence and thus comments on the necessarily artificial nature of the narration act may be called an architectonic novel. Such works of literature help raise readers' awareness of the complexity of the reading act as well as the complexity of their own existence, instead of presenting them with an artful smokes-and-mirrors illusion of a simpler (and perhaps nicer, more palatable) concept of reality. Such novels encourage readers to look through the deceptively static appearance of the printed words and — by implication — the deceptively static appearance of all narratives that make up our human experience.

Bakhtin's insights on how humans tend to create simplified perceptions of reality instead of engaging in a thoroughly cumbersome analysis appears to be shared by Golding. *The Spire*, in particular, provides a narrative approach that takes readers on an architectonic adventure. It does so by breaching the traditional boundary that exists between first and third person narration norms and by presenting readers with nebulous narrative descriptors which exemplify the limits of human perception, which in turn serve as a literary commentary on the architectonic nature of our reality. Golding's main character and pseudo narrator, Jocelin, does not simply represent another example of the stereotypically unreliable character, as one may suspect, even though he certainly does not appear to be of lucid mind. Jocelin's perceptions and assertions are certainly not meant to be taken as narrative absolutes. They are to be understood as Jocelin's own personal once-occurrent, never-repeatable participatory acts. The novel vacillates very subtly between first and third person narration, or more precisely, the perceptions of first and third person narration. As such, we are presented with an evidently created narrative, one that is to be understood as the narrator's own once-occurrent, never-repeatable participatory narration act that readers may receive by means of their own once-occurrent, never-repeatable participatory interpretation act. While these architectonic acts may be applied to all narratives (and everything we do, for that matter), *The Spire's* unique narration style is apparent in its willful artificiality.

*The Spire* models the complex reality of immediate and personal experiences Bakhtin discusses in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. *The Spire* entertains readers by demanding their active cerebral participation, not unlike an invitation to pose as secondary or tertiary narrators, and thus as co-creators of a continuously evolving story. Golding's style invites and even demands active reading, the kind of reading act that consciously draws readers into the act of deciphering this text's complex meanings, in contrast to the more passive unconscious and even subconscious reading acts that most examples of written entertainment elicit. Golding lures his readers into this novel with the overtly simplistic, yet effective plot of the old cliché "pride comes before the fall." He then pounces on his more or less unwitting readers with tremendous psychological depth, in particular the psychological depth of his main character and by proxy the readers themselves. Although *The Spire* has not before been brought into context with architectonics itself, several scholars pointed out the complexity of the novel, which certainly pertains or at least relates to what Bakhtin describes as architectonic. One of the novel's earliest critics, David Skilton, opined that "it is a novel which absolutely demands to be read twice" (45). *The Spire* tends to elude readers in its exploration of the mind of the main character, Jocelin. Readers often have to half-guess and assume who says and who thinks what.

*The Spire* has been no exception among Golding's novels in that it triggered an avalanche of critical response. The variety of the types of critical commentary on *The Spire* is the first indication that one is dealing here with a complex piece of literature, a novel that resists a unanimous response. Although initial sales were good, the early critical response "tended to be, to say the least, guarded" (Crompton 64). For instance in 1967 Derek Roper along with "most critics [was] disappointed by ... *The Spire*" (19). However, the majority of more recent scholars and critics who published discussions on *The Spire* are intrigued with the seemingly never ending source of interpretations that this novel appears to offer. The fact that *The Spire*, along with other thoroughly discussed and interpreted Golding novels, still elicits new and fresh responses suggests that early critics underestimated its seemingly simplistic plot and overlooked the complexity that lurked underneath the surface of its veneer. In this context, Jeanne Delbaere's interpretation proves to be insightful: "on first reading *The Spire* the reader is apt to find its structure as clear as Jocelin's vision at the beginning of the book when he saw the spire—the diagram of his prayer—sketched with simple geometric lines against the sky ... By adding to the spatial and temporal structure of his work the organic 'growth of a plant,' Golding has succeeded in giving it a new dimension in which past and present are blended and the different interpretations woven together in a complex whole infinitely richer than the mere sum of its components" (107). Delbaere's description of Jocelin's visions as an organic and dynamic spire is quite instructive and in tune with an architectonic reading.

At first glance, the novel is just a simple plant. But, at closer scrutiny, the dynamic and organic nature becomes apparent and discounts any ultimate claims about its structure. The narrative explores its environment in the same way that a vine creeps in search for fertile ground and sunlight.

Similar to Delbaere, who discusses the organic characteristics of *The Spire*, Margaret Hallissy provides another aspect of the novel's complexity: the interdependence of Christian and Pagan aspects: "Paganism is to Christianity as the cellarage is to the spire; one is built on the other, but neither replaces the other" (330). This dualistic aspect is nevertheless a complicated one. Instead of a simple battle between two opposing forces, readers are presented with a yin-yang relationship, akin to Taoist thought. Neither side is complete without its opposite. This is not merely a clearly architectonic aspect of *The Spire*, despite the structural nature of the concept. It may lend itself more to a discussion on heteroglossia (another Bakhtinian concept discussed in his *The Dialogic Imagination*) as the two opposing aspects are related to one another within their complex historical webbing, and neither can be strictly divorced from the other. Yet, one may go one step further than Hallissy and interpret Golding's treatment of these two concepts of Christianity and Paganism (which clearly carry strong meaning within the Western psyche) as another architectonic commentary on how readers (as well as critics) create their own interpretation of what Paganism and Christianity exactly mean. So, perhaps this is another example of built-in interactive reading technique, the kind that sets up unsuspecting readers for a surprising discovery of self, not unlike Bakhtin's contemplation of his own architectonic being, as quoted earlier: "I occupy a place that cannot be taken by anyone else and is impenetrable for anyone else. In the given once-occurrent point where I am now located, no one else has ever been located in the once-occurrent time and once-occurrent space of once-occurrent Being" (*Toward* 40). Readers are challenged to define their own "once-occurrent Being" in relation to the question of Christianity and Paganism, in context within as well as without the novel, at every step of the way of their own chronotopal journeys as participants in the cosmic comedy.

Skilton calls *The Spire* "almost willfully obscure" and makes an important point: "the difficult thing to decide on first reading *The Spire* is whether it is exceedingly obvious or extremely subtle ... The paradoxical impression of simplicity and complexity that one has at first arises from ... fairly obvious qualities in Golding's writing" (45). And Paul Crawford in his contribution to Golding's life's work, perhaps comes closest to a discussion of architectonics as he delves deeply into some of Bakhtin's other concepts, in particular the carnivalesque: "as with his earlier experimentalism in *Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall*, and *The Spire*, Golding employs the fantastic and carnivalesque modes nonsatirically as part of an epistemological commentary on the constructed, fragmented, and indeterminate nature of reality" (9). *The Spire's* narration style and perspective is the novel's prime example of architectonic nature. Golding directly challenges readers to simultaneously immerse themselves in the narration/reading experience and become conscious of its distinctness as an act of narration/reading. At first sight, *The Spire* appears to be written from a third-person, omniscient-narrator perspective. At closer scrutiny, the narration perspective becomes less clear. While the novel is narrated by an anonymous voice whose owner has no apparent role in the story itself, and while this narrator is able to see into his main character's mind in the tradition of the omniscient narrator, *The Spire's* narration style could not be confidently described as third person or omniscient, objective, or even completely uninvolved. It is more of a blend of traditional third person and first person perspectives (Redpath 137). The narrator delves deeply into the mind and emotions of Jocelin, so deeply in fact, that Jocelin's thoughts and feelings are directly expressed by the narrator as if they were the narrator's own. It is almost as if the narrator temporarily becomes Jocelin (or vice versa) whenever the content of narration becomes so intense, immediate, and personal that it warrants the more immediate voice of the first person narrator.

This happens already early in the novel. Golding eases his readers into a world where first and third person narration intertwine into something that could be called an architectonic narrative consciousness. The following is a good example: "He shook his head in rueful wonder at the solid sunlight. If it were not for Abel's pillar, he thought, I would take the important level of light to be a true dimension, and so believe that my stone ship lay aground on her side; and he smiled a little, to think how the mind touches all things with law, yet deceives itself as easily as a child. Facing that barricade of wood and canvas at the other end of the nave -- and now that the candles have gone from the side altars, I could think this was some sort of pagan temple; and those two men posed so centrally in the sun dust with their crows (and what a quarry noise and echo as they lever up the slab and let it fall back) the priests of some outlandish rite -- Forgive me" (6). Shortly after, Golding presents another excellent architectonic moment in which readers are left to wonder who narrates the story, thus illuminating the constructed and therefore architectonic nature of the narration as well as reading processes: "As if the knowing was cue for entry in an interlude, he heard a latch lift in the northwest corner and a door creak open. I shall see, as I see daily, my daughter in God!" (7). This is soon followed by yet another excellent example. We are witnessing as Jocelin ponders the beginning of the long awaited building project: "Courage. Glory be. It is a final beginning. It was one thing to let him dig a pit there at the crossways like a grave for some notable. This is different. Now I lay a hand on the very body of my church. Like a surgeon, I take my knife to the stomach drugged with poppy. And his mind played for a while with the fancy of the

drug, thinking that the thin sound of mattins was the slow breathing of the drugged body where it lay stretched on its back" (9).

The above text delves deeply into the mind of Jocelin without clearly marking it as anything other than part of the third-person narration. The narrator seems to identify with Jocelin's thoughts. Such intimate exploration of Jocelin's mind is certainly appropriate here considering how intensely the narration focuses on Jocelin or more precisely, on Jocelin's thoughts and emotions. And while the narrator senses Jocelin's consciousness, Jocelin himself believes to sense the cathedral's consciousness, as if it were a living body, as if he himself were literally the outstretched man lying on his back, as Jocelin pictures it. So here is an indication that Golding is commenting on the interrelated nature of human consciousness and the complex intricacy between consciousness and the natural world it observes, represented by the converged corpora of Jocelin and the cathedral. There seems to be an attempt here to tear down the walls that neatly separate the narrator from the protagonist, and in this case even the walls between the protagonist and the anthropomorphized cathedral. Each subject of narration is imbued with consciousness. The readers, as co-creators of the narrative, are challenged to imbue themselves with consciousness. Readers are confronted with Golding's overtly crafted constructions (his narrative architecture, one may posit), not only inviting readers' awareness but their conscious participation. Golding's blending of first and third person perspectives helps this novel avoid the shackles of narrative conventionality. This characteristic contributes to the dynamism and complexity of this novel, to its architectonic nature. Readers experience a novel that calls into question the very conventions of narrative traditions. Golding alerts readers to the artificial nature of narration.

The description of Jocelin's visions of and encounters with his guardian angel are of particular interest. The angel is especially important in regard to how Golding crafts Jocelin's consciousness. As a representation of both delusion and wishful projection, the angel's depiction serves as a window into an important part of his consciousness. Jocelin mistakes the physical manifestation of his spinal affliction for a messenger from heaven; he mistakes the spinal inflammation's warming sensation as a sort of comfort sent from god. As the warming sensation turns into a smarting pain, he feels that the angel is morphing into a demon. Instead of realizing that he is afflicted by a physiological condition, he further rationalizes his condition in spiritual terms: "the angel stayed with him and he said before he fell asleep: I need you! Before today I didn't really know why. Forgive me! And the angel warmed him. But as to keep him humble, Satan was permitted to torment him during the night by a meaningless and hopeless dream" (59). During the spire's construction everything Jocelin experiences is put into a religious perspective on a grand scale. Jocelin finds himself an important player in the midst of a Miltonian epic battle between the forces of good and evil, in accordance with both the Church's teachings and Jocelin's own interpretation thereof. He sees himself as an essential actor within that epic, a faithful agent of God who is being tempted and tested in similar fashion to the ways in which the Bible's greatest protagonists were tempted and tested. He sees himself on a level with Biblical characters such as Abraham, Moses, and even Jesus. And that is certainly the genesis of Jocelin's tragic flaw or sin, namely delusional pride. Jocelin's hamartia is perhaps not so much the result of misguided spiritual zeal as it is Jocelin's lack of architectonic awareness, his ability to divorce his own acts from those of others, especially the Biblical characters with whom he identifies.

Jocelin believes himself to be in direct touch and even in communion with the celestial and demonic powers that rule the universe, and his consciousness reflects the extent of his delusions in the strong intimacy that he feels towards these supernatural forces. In fact, the further we go into the novel the more it becomes apparent that Jocelin sees himself as the third party of a cosmic triumvirate consisting of god, satan, and himself. It appears that, in his own mind, Jocelin represents humanity — Jocelin as the new Adam. As Jocelin believes to do god's work, he feels himself constantly visited by Satan who is trying to destroy his willpower and the physical manifestation thereof, the spire. We can see the intimacy between the third person narrator and Jocelin, and between Jocelin and Satan perhaps most closely during the August gale that threatens to destroy the almost completed spire: "he [Jocelin] lifted his head a little and squinted into the grey light, across the useful grave; and at that moment, Satan in the likeness of a cosmic wildcat leapt off all four feet on the northern horizon and came screaming down at Jocelin and his folly" (168). The narrator eventually and gradually yields more and more indications that Jocelin is suffering from a highly vivid and even perilous imagination, one that seeks sameness between himself and the greats of the Church's teachings and traditions. Instead of appreciating architectonic uniqueness, Jocelin yearns for sameness, absolutes, even homogeneity. Within this passage, readers experience Jocelin's illusions on a very personal level. There is no overt mention that Jocelin is mistaken or that he suffers from psychological disorders. Readers are provided with a glimpse of Jocelin's emotional experience, which is very real to Jocelin and therefore represents an architectonic act. As readers gradually explore the world of Jocelin's emotions, experiences, and interactions with real and imagined characters they are placed in a situation that facilitates and perhaps even encourages empathy with the complex nature of Jocelin's condition. Angels, demons, the anthropomorphized cathedral, even Satan himself all play unique roles within Jocelin's consciousness. They are part of his complex (if not schizophrenic) personality.

It would have been easier for Golding to simply describe and categorize Jocelin as a delusional or mentally ill man and could have possibly averted some of the early negative criticism if he had chosen a more translucent style. Instead Golding fashioned a narrating voice that intimately traces Jocelin's experiences. Readers are not exactly told that Jocelin is mentally unwell, yet they are exploring Jocelin's symptoms. Readers learn about Jocelin simultaneously through the inside of Jocelin's mind and from the outside through an intimate, yet third person narrator's perspective. Jocelin and the narrator both experience the same event, yet each character's experience of the same event constitutes a distinct act in itself, despite the fact that these two experienced acts appear to blend together at times. As readers follow the narrator's exploration of Jocelin's adventures they are presented with both Jocelin's and the narrator's perspectives. *The Spire's* multiplicitous narration technique can be seen as a commentary on the once-occurrent, never-repeatable nature of acts of narration, of immediate experience, and even of having one's story narrated by another (the presence of multiple voices is related to another two of Bakhtin's concepts: heteroglossia and dialogism: see *The Dialogic passim*). As readers follow this intricate relationship between *The Spire's* narrator and its protagonist, the question is raised whether they, the readers, may have a similar relationship to the text. Readers may constitute a third party to this narrative, not unlike what Phillip Redpath observes: "the reader becomes the second protagonist" (124). Redpath calls the text "a fusion of inside and out, the inside of the text and the outside, of Jocelin's 'I' and that of the reader" (137).

The interwoven relationship between Jocelin's consciousness and that of the narrator is only one aspect of the novel's architectonic nature. Large parts of the novel take part in Jocelin's deluded and sometimes even drugged mind. Other parts simply focus on Jocelin's emotions and responses to other characters. In this novel, there is very little in terms of definite, clear, or objective description that may cater to our all-too-human positivistic needs. For the most part, readers are exposed to flashes of information: raw data that has not been neatly analyzed, categorized, or filtered for easy digestion. *The Spire* resembles a mosaic of reflections that are just there: raw, unprocessed, not yet masticated or categorized, depictions of experiences that are as close to the once-occurrent, never-repeatable act as can possibly be reproduced in a novelistic text. *The Spire* masterfully dons the cloak of once-occurrence and never-repeatability and thus allows a glimpse of the complexity of a person's experience as it happens. Since Jocelin is a very emotional character who is led by forces most people would categorize as the figments of a deluded imagination, these little once-occurrent, never-repeatable flashes of experiences and emotions are especially vibrant in their forcefulness, complexity, as well as concreteness. They are real, at least in a phenomenological as well as an architectonic sense. The following excerpt is a good example: "Yet before the sun had gone, he found he was not alone with his angel. Someone else was facing him. This creature was framed by the metal sheet that stood against the sky opposite him. For a moment he thought of exorcism, but when he lifted his hand, the figure raised one too. So he crawled across the boards on hands and knees and the figure crawled towards him" (149). Jocelin's experience of catching a glimpse of his own reflection in a sheet metal used for redirecting sunlight into the pit under the crossways is conveyed in small empirical and emotional tidbits. We are not told "And Jocelin looked in the mirror." Little by little, readers are given Jocelin's experienced impressions — as little pieces of the puzzle — until they have enough pieces to make an educated guess that the ghostlike, almost ghoulish apparition is in fact Jocelin's reflection.

Just then Jocelin slowly begins to understand that he has undergone a physical transformation, one that parallels the emotional and spiritual ones. He realizes that his physical self-image no longer applies. As the puzzle pieces of once-occurrent, never-repeatable acts fall into place, he begins (as do the readers) to understand that he has changed into a somewhat monstrous and uncanny figure that sports a "wild halo of hair ... skinny arms and legs that stuck out of a girt and dirty robe ... eyes, deep in sockets over which skin was dragged-dragged too over the cheekbones, then sucked in ... nose like a beak and now nearly as sharp, the deep grooves in the face, the gleam of teeth" (149). Jocelin is shocked to see his reflection in the mirror, the image of a demonic creature rivaling some of Hieronymus Bosch's fantastic inventions. Only slowly does it sink in that the construction of the spire, what he believes to be a service to god and "a prayer in stone," is turning him into a fallen (or falling) creature.

Jocelin's character is ultimately difficult to define. Readers are provided with certain traits and characteristics that tend to apply, but it is practically impossible to absolutely define him. He is a character in between categories and he is a character in evolution. For instance, he is a medieval character, but Golding didn't even intend for *The Spire* to be a particularly medieval or historical novel (Golding qtd. in Biles 98). Jocelin is a high-ranking church official, but he is also the pawn of a practical joke between the former king and his mistress, Jocelin's Aunt Alison. He is trying to serve god, but really he is catering to the sin of pride. Jocelin's spire is supposed to exalt god, but really it is destroying the community of worshipers, and the building project turns the church into a quasi-pagan temple and whorehouse (see Hallissy). Jocelin's angel is sometimes a comforter and sometimes a fiend. And, Jocelin is somewhere in between victimizer and victim, or perhaps he is both. So many of the people around him fall victim to his reckless and radical behavior, but he himself is also suffering injustices. For instance, his visions are doubtlessly encouraged by medieval church mysticism that seeks god manifested in every aspect of everyday life. Jocelin's spinal disease certainly contributes to his downfall and his poor judgment. And,

of course, Jocelin lacks the maturity to be dean of a cathedral. He was catapulted into an office for which he was not ready. It is also noteworthy that there is really no ill will in Jocelin's disastrous decisions. He is mostly guilty of poor judgment. He is perhaps less a villain than he is a tragic hero, or maybe he is even just a caricature of tragic heroism, since he lacks the noble or exceptional characteristics of a tragic hero.

Jocelin, as a character, just like the novel as a whole, defies definition. In L.L. Dickson's words, the novel "explores the paradoxical interrelationships between good and evil, the ambiguity of society's moral systems, and the self-delusions of a totally unreliable narrator" (76). Readers become critical observers and witnesses of once-occurrent and never repeatable acts as the complex world of Jocelin's psyche – as seen through the no less complex perspective of a first/third person hybrid narrator – entices and draws them in. "There are for Golding no simple, straightforward answers to the question of what is man's nature; yet the mutually opposed ideas his novels contain are often quite familiar in themselves, becoming complex only in their coexistence and presentation" (Skilton 45). Jocelin's adventure is crafted by one of Bakhtin's kindred spirits. It can be experienced but never defined.

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